

Experts believe that your mind, like your muscles, becomes flabby with disuse, so it's vitally important to keep mentally alive and interested. Of course it's easier said than done. Few of us are scholars. But there are many things the average person can do to keep his or her mind alert and stimulated — take up a hobby, learn a new skill, enrol in adult education courses, become active in clubs and associations, read books, travel, do volunteer work.

Have regular medical and dental check-ups

As you grow older and resistance to disease weakens, it becomes increasingly important to see your doctor for a check-up regularly (preferably at least once a year). Many of the killer diseases that afflict us in maturity and old age can be cured or controlled . . . *provided they are diagnosed and treated early enough.*

Often neglected is the importance of dental care, as you get along in years. Problems with the teeth and gums, or ill-fitting dentures, are often reasons why older people fail to get proper nutrition.

Learning to handle stress

A certain amount of stress is a good thing. Athletic achievement, acts of courage, laughter, business success — all of these are in large measure a response to stress. But as you grow older, it becomes more difficult to respond positively to the nervous and emotional stresses and strains of life.

Under stress, you can become irritable, anxious, depressed. You tire easily. You sleep badly. Sexual activity may be impaired. The risks of gastric problems, ulcers, high blood pressure and heart disease are increased. Relations with family, friends, and associates deteriorate. Your work suffers.

The great danger is that you turn to the wrong things to try to escape from your problems. You start taking a few more drinks. You eat too much. You smoke too much. You take refuge in drugs like barbiturates and tranquilizers (remember that sensitivity to drugs increases with aging).

A good rest, a change of scene, vigorous exercise: these are healthy ways to relieve the tension. If this doesn't work, seek professional advice.

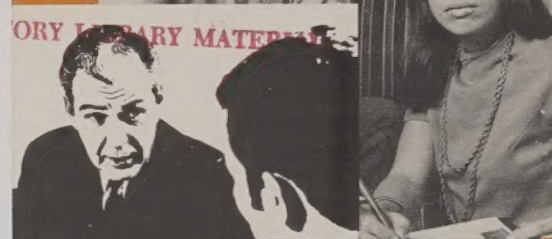
Let's be realistic...

It's foolish to deny that aging doesn't bring its problems. But if you keep physically and mentally active, it brings its rewards as well. Medical science has made incredible strides to make a longer life possible, and to eliminate (or at least alleviate) many of the diseases that afflicted the aging only a few decades ago. But essentially, what you do with the extra years that have been given to you is up to you. Enjoy them in good health.

Aging

The Myths and the Reality

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The Fountain of Youth

Throughout history, the fear of aging has sent men searching the globe for the "Fountain of Youth." The search goes on today. A multi-million dollar industry has developed, providing potions that contain a grain of hope that the ravages of time can be held in check -- a list that includes anything from cosmetics and vitamins to monkey glands and powdered rhinoceros horn.

Medical science too keeps up the search, experimenting with organ transplants, enzymes, hormones, artificial viruses and tissue culture.

More and more people today are living longer and longer. Not because a miraculous cure for aging has been discovered, but quite simply because of our growing efficiency in controlling the killer diseases of youth and middle age, aided by better nutrition. The average man of 40 today can expect to live to 71, the average woman to 76.

A natural process

Aging is a natural and universal process. It is not, as some think, a crisis that happens suddenly and brutally in middle age, but a continuous unfolding cycle of change that starts before birth.

The biological process of development and aging is highly complex, and not fully understood even by doctors. We do know that every part of the body, like the parts of a car, begins to "wear out" to some degree as we grow older. Many factors contribute to this . . . the stresses of working, of family life, of the world around us . . . the cumulative effect of illnesses throughout life . . . heredity, nutrition, the kind of person we are and the kind of life we lead.

The effects of aging vary greatly from person to person. Some people show all the signs, symptoms and mental attitudes we associate with old age at 45 or 50. But most of us know people leading busy, productive lives in their 70s and 80s.

As we grow older, all our organs and bodily functions become a bit less efficient. Along with the physical changes, mental and psychological changes take place. The typical image of people getting on in years is that their mental powers are slipping, they resist change, and they are becoming forgetful, cranky and difficult. But science has proved there is in fact little or no decrease in the ability to learn, to reason, to be creative and to work productively as we grow older. On the contrary, some mental powers, like problem solving, reach their peak in later years.

What to do

There are a number of things everyone can do to equip themselves to cope with the problems of aging, and to enjoy the opportunities and challenges of later years, which can be just as exciting and rewarding as those of youth. Unfortunately, these things are all very down-to-earth and undramatic; but in these simple truths lies the real Elixir of Life.

Important to keep physically active

Regular physical activity prolongs the feeling of fitness and well-being. A moderate amount of exercise every day stimulates the blood circulation, tones up the muscles.

Exercise doesn't have to be punishing. Do what you enjoy. A brisk walk, swimming, jogging, cross-country skiing, bicycling, gardening . . . these are all effective.

In our sit-down society, it takes a bit of discipline. If you're tired after a day's work and the drive home, it's all too easy to slump in front of the TV. But it's precisely this kind of armchair living, with its overeating and lack of exercise, that lets the body become rusty with disuse, and encourages heart disease, high blood pressure and other ailments of aging.

Don't overdo it

As we grow older, moderation should be our watchword. Moderation in everything — exercise, food, alcohol, smoking, resting, and even watching TV. We must learn to concentrate on things we can do something about, and not worry about things we can't change. It's important to practice moderation in anxiety, too.

Enjoy your food, but eat sensibly

A well-rounded diet is the best guarantee of continued good health, just as being overweight is perhaps the best guarantee of suffering the infirmities of aging.

Exercise the mind

Many scholars, scientists, authors and artists reach their productive peak in later years. Why? Quite simple, because they have never lost the *habit* of thinking and learning. They are living, vital proof that you *can* teach an old dog new tricks.